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WSIS Forum 2023 Opening Ceremony

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MODERATOR: Good morning. Thank you, participants. We
would like you to please take your seats because we want to
start on time. We have a very nice dialogue to start for you
today. We would like to ask you to please take your seats so
that we can start on time and finish on time. Thank you very
much. Good morning, everybody.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the WSIS
Forum 2023. We request you to please take your seats as we're
open to start the Opening Ceremony. We don't want to be late.
We want all of our programs to finish on time. We request you
to please be seated. Thank you very much. There is a lot of
time for conversations, lots of nice setups, lounges for
conversations, so please do take your seat so that we can begin
on time. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning, again to all who joined us for the WSIS
Forum 2023. Thank you so much for being with us in Geneva and
for the remote participants who are joining us remotely. We
would like to begin our Opening Ceremony now of the WSIS Forum
2023. The WSIS Forum is a UN process which is multistakeholder
and brings stakeholders together from all parts of the world
that will learn and share.

Thank you very much, and we'd like to start by the UN
Secretary-General's address Antonio Gutierrez to the WSIS Forum
2023 and I request my colleagues to please play the video

address.

>> ANTONIO GUTERRES: Nearly 20 years ago the Summit on
the Information Society presents a vision for the future in
which everyone has the opportunity to create, access, utilize,
and share information and knowledge.

Today, digital technologies are changing our lives,
changing the very fabric of society, but there are also
regulations and inequalities. We must bridge the digital divide
and ensure that everyone has access to the Internet in this
decade, in particular women and girls.

At the same time, we must prevent and reduce the dangers
of digital technologies, stop the spread of news and
disinformation and hate speech and the misuse of personal data
used without our consent, and promote a humane Internet. That
is why I propose a digital contact on open and secure digital
future for all. For this compact to be agreed by governments at
the next year's Summit of the Future with inputs from the
private sector, Civil Society, academia and others. We're also
working with a wide range of actors to address a code of conduct
for information integrity on digital platforms to reduce harm
and increase accountability while defending the right of freedom
of expression.

I urge this Forum to help carry these goals forward and
together and build a free and fair information society for all
people everywhere. Thank you.

(Applause).

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Secretary-General. The
UN family remains committed toward implements the WSIS process,
the WSIS Action Lines toward advancing the achievement of the
Sustainable Development Goals. We have more than 32 UN agencies
present and 1, 300 stakeholder from all over the world
physically here with us and many joining us virtually. Thank
you very much, and we'd now like to move on to the ITU
Secretary-General, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin to please deliver
her opening remarks.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you. Thank you,
Gitangalie. Good morning, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.
Thank you so much for being here on this very rainy Tuesday
morning in Geneva.

As you heard from the UN Secretary-General, a free and
fair information society for all people everywhere. That's why
we're all here today, and I'm pleased to see leaders from UN
sister agencies, including the DG of UNOG, welcome, the DG of
UPU, welcome, and the DG of WIPO, welcome to you as well.

Also joining us remotely, we have the FAO DG, the UN ECE
Executive Secretary, and of course a huge thanks to our
co-organizers, UNESCO, UNGTAD and UNDP. I thank them all for

their steadfast support of this Forum and for their commitment to digital inclusion and sustainable development.

It's also a pleasure to welcome this morning the UN Secretary-General Envoy for Technology. Welcome, Amandeep.

Ladies and gentlemen, 20 years ago as you heard from the UN SG, another Secretary-General addressed the World Summit on the Information Society. It was the first phase of the summit in Geneva, and it was a cold November day, and I remember it like it was yesterday.

Political leaders from more than 175 countries were there, and I quote, we have in our hands, on our desktops, and in the skies the ability to improve the standards of living for millions and millions of people. Back then 12% of the world's population had access to the Internet, and by the end of last year, this number had reached 66%. 66% connected. Putting in our hands the ability to change not millions, but billions, billions upon billions of peoples lives for better around the world.

That's why there was great focus on digital at the recent LDC5 Conference, the conference to least-developed countries that recently concluded with a theme of potential prosperity, and it's also why the ongoing session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women is focused on digital. Closing that gap of women and girls in science, technology, and innovation.

I was actively engaged in both events, and I can tell you, expectations are high. Ladies and gentlemen, this is our moment. It's the moment that the entire WSIS Community has been waiting for. What we've learned over the last 20 years, must -- it must serve to help us accelerate progress to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs and the WSIS Action Lines are inextricably linked, and we are in a race against time.

We've reached the midpoint to 2030, the deadline to achieve those SDGs, and progress has regrettably either stalled or gone backwards, especially for those in the Global South. We see millions more living in extreme poverty. Millions of children missing out on education, and millions more that are displaced by the impacts of climate change.

As we all know too well, it's always the most vulnerable that are most impacted. And to succeed, we cannot afford to leave anyone behind, and that's why we need to bring the hardest-to-connect communities online as fast as we can.

I'm excited by what initiatives like Partner 2 Connect have achieved. In over a year we have mobilized 600 pledges amounting to some 30-million U.S. dollars and more than 30% of the pledges actually focus on at least one LDC.

We recently launched a year-long campaign to boost the

number of Partner 2 Connect pledges for LDCs and look forward to
many more in advance of the World Telecommunication and
Information Society day, May 17, ITU anniversary and this year's
theme is on LDCs.

I'm sure I can count on the WSIS Community to answer this
call, because you are -- you are heirs to a very long and proud
tradition of fostering inclusive dialogue amongst different
stakeholders. Participants of the first Summit 20 years ago
spanned governments, international organizations, Civil Society,
academia, and the private sector. It's still true today.
That's the enduring strength of the WSIS process and that's
exactly what we need, ladies and gentlemen, if we are going to
rescue the SDGs.

In September there will be an SDG Summit on the margins of
the UNGA to review the implementation of the SDGs. ITU is
partnering with others to organize a digital day, which will
contribute to the Summit's objectives by showcasing
digital-based solutions for each and every SDG by mobilizing
renewed commitments to Partner 2 Connect and by streamlining
resources and collaboration with key mechanisms like the WSIS
process and the Global Digital Compact.

If Cofi had been here today he would have reminded us as
he did 20 years ago that an open and inclusive information
society that benefits all people will not emerge without
sustained commitment and investment. So let's reaffirm our
commitment to the WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs, and let's
invest. Let's invest in an open, free, and secure digital
future for all. Thank you very much.

(Applause).

>> ALEX WONG: Good morning. I have the honor to
co-facilitate this opening ceremony first session together with
my, Gitanjali. For the next segment we'll hear from the WSIS
co-organizers whose support is indispensable to the growth and
development of the WSIS process.

First we have Mr. Pedro manual Moreno, Deputy
Secretary-General of UNCTAD, WSIS action line A9C7. Mr. Moreno,
please come up to podium, you have the floor. Thank you.

>> PEDRO MANUEL MORENO: Excellencies, dear colleagues,
ladies and gentlemen, Secretary-General Doreen, thank you for
hosting us. I am pleased to join our fellow organizers and
welcome you to the WSIS Forum 2023. The Forum this year focuses
on how WSIS Action Lines can be more effectively used for
recovering lost grounds after the COVID-19 pandemic.

While this issue is key, the multiple crises we are going
through have led to even more challenges and complexity. The
effects over the war in Ukraine, threat of climate change and
need to accelerate actions if we want to maintain a chance for

achieving the SDGs.

It implies for this forum that digital cooperation is key. Actually, I was very glad and pleased that in the breakfast event of the UN Group of the Information Society this morning, the UN System emphasized its commitment to digital cooperation and the urgency of taking concrete actions to make it effective.

UNCTAD will do for developing countries liberating the digital economy for develop am goals. This is also central in the mandate. In 2021, the UNCTAD membership strengthened the mandate to work on the digital economy, requesting us to, and I quote, move to a more resilient digital and inclusive world of shared prosperity by economies through unification, fostering a more sustainable and resilient economy, improving the way that it is financed and revitalizing more territories. I can assure you that we are taking all steps forward to achieve this goal.

I want to give you examples on our work on digital cooperation. The UNCTAD led trade for all initiative has grown into a partnership of 35 partner organizations which support inclusive e-commerce development, technical assistance and capacity building. UNCTAD acts as Secretariat to the commission on science and technology for development which will review outcomes and follow up to the WSIS at the international and national levels, meeting from the 27s of March. Then from 10 to 12 of May, UNCTAD holds intergovernmental group of experts on e-commerce and digital economy where experts examine the role of ever-more strategic way of achieving the 2030 Agenda and Global Food of data.

I encourage all stakeholders to follow and engage if the discussions. It is our engagement, experience, and expertise that will make the difference on the way forward. Together we can advocate for multistakeholder partnership for a digital compact for the future in 2024, drawing and applying lessons from the review of 20 years of the WSIS process, tracing a path for digital cooperation beyond 2025, and accelerating progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

Dear friends, UNCTAD remains fully committed to remain in development gains from digitalization. I look forward to engaging with all stakeholders here in Geneva and everywhere the digital economy is being discussed. With this, I really wish all for a very meaningful and action-oriented outcome of this forum. I thank you all. Thank you very much.

>> ALEX WONG: Thank you. I invite now Mr. tuffic Jelassi Assistant Director-general Communication for UNESCO, also working on several WSIS Action Lines. Dr. Jelassi.

>> TAWFIK JELASSI: Secretary-General of the ITU, excellencies, delegates, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of UNESCO as co-organizer of this event, I would like to welcome

you all to this important forum. All of you with us in this
room and also the participants connecting online. By joining us
today, you are helping us achieve our shared vision of a truly
multistakeholder and inclusive cooperation towards achieving the
sustainable develop am goals. It was said with over 60% of the
world's population today using the Internet, it is crucial we
provide societies with digital literacy and competencies to
enable them to navigate the digital landscape which is
unfortunately, today, becoming increasingly full of harmful
content.

        The widespread use of digital platforms in our daily lives
has presented a significant challenge for users, for
governments, for societies at large due to the unregulated
dissemination of misinformation, hate speech, and other harmful
content. You heard the UNSGs speaking to this a few minutes
ago.

        Recognizing the urgency of this situation, UNESCO is
actively engaged in a series of multistakeholder consultations,
aiming at developing regulatory guidelines for digital platforms
to ensure that information is a common public good and does not
become or stay as a public hazard, nor as a public harm.

        These guidelines will also support freedom of expression
while ensuring accurate and reliable information available in
the public sphere. It is for this reason that UNESCO has last
month in Paris a global dialogue on drafting regulatory
guidelines for digital platforms, and we were delighted to see
over 4300 participants taking participate in this global
dialogue.

        Of course, when I mention regulating digital platforms, we
are not here to sensor the content on digital platforms. We are
here also to safeguard freedom of expression online.

        Ladies and gentlemen, with rapid advancement of digital
technology across all areas of life, a significant threat has
emerged in our digital transformation journeys. There is
growing concern about the amplification of digital and knowledge
divides worldwide, which could severely impact our societies,
our economies, governments, and the environment.

        As the new technologies such as artificial intelligence
continue to evolve with the Internet -- within the Internet
ecosystem, the question is, how do we ensure a human-centered
and inclusive Internet and digital transformation?

        At UNESCO, we believe that applying the Internet
universally to indicators which we defined a number of years ago
and are widely known as the Rome Principles, Rome Principles
standing for R, human rights based, O for open, A for
accessible, and M for multistakeholder approach to digital
governance and digital development. ROAM.

UNESCO open solutions developed in 2008 has evolved over time to advancing information as a public good. The objective here is to expand the global knowledge, promote sustainable develop am, as well as protect and uphold human rights as a fundamental to our approach.

Information should indeed be a common public good that enables citizens to exercise their fundamental rights, that supports gender equality, facilitates participation and trust in democratic governance and sustainable development, leaving no one behind.

However, achieving this requires renewed understanding of the digital global communications and information ecosystem as a global resource. It must be inclusive, governed as a common good, and managed in the public interest to ensure sustainability and equitable distribution.

In the same spirit, UNESCO is actively seeking to contribute to the ongoing global digital compact consultations this week as lead facilitator of various WSIS Action Lines, UNESCO is organizing this forum, several events to foster inclusion and cooperation, to nurture this unique multistakeholder forum and pave the way toward the WSIS + 20 review.

Let me conclude by saying that I'm very pleased to invite you to join us tomorrow for our high-level event on digital governance and capacity building, as well as the implementation of the UNESCO Open Education Resource Recommendations and our 6 WSIS Action Line meetings.

Let us continue working together to promote an inclusive and human-centered digital transformation. Thank you for your kind attention.

>> ALEX WONG: Thank you, Dr. Jelassi. Our final WSIS coordinator, Robert Opp a Chief Digital Officer from UNDP.

>> ROBERT OPP: Excellencies, Delegates, colleagues, Secretary-General, it's a pleasure to be here with all of you at the WSIS Forum today to represent the United Nations Development Program and our administrator Steiner. This year's theme of building back better and accelerating the SDGs is extremely timely given that the UN is holding the SDG Summit this September at the midpoint of implementation of the goals before the 2030 target.

With only 8 years left to achieve the SDGs, we need to redouble our efforts and accelerate them as we've lost crucial ground over the last few years. Indeed, the WSIS Community has been underlining the benefits of ICTs and connectivity for years and plays an essential role in helping us get back on track toward 2030.

The discussions here today and throughout the entire week

will be critical for that. At UNDP, we witnessed a huge surge
in demand for ICTs and digital support for development since the
COVID pandemic. In the first couple of years after the
pandemic, we supported over 600 digital solutions in well over
100 countries. Our accelerator labs in 92 countries innovated
and scaled up solutions across a breath-taibing range of
innovative technologies and approaching.

However, we know that we need to move from fragmented and
one-off approaches to more inclusive and holistic strategic
digital information at a societal level. Ensuring that no one
is left behind is critical and it requires a people-centered,
intentionally inclusive, and rights-based approach that includes
views from all parts of society.

Of course, this means renewing our efforts to bridge the
digital divide, and let's not forget that in LDCs, the digital
divide is still huge. Only 36% of people connected. That's
even less when if comes to the gender digital divide, only 30%
of women in LDCs are actually connected to the Internet.

So this means that we all, international organizations,
government ministries, private sector, Civil Society, must work
together in a coherent and complementary way. UNDP is working
with over 40 countries at the moment to assess current digital
development status on various aspects of society from government
capacity to citizen digital literacy. We're working also with
another 18 countries on supporting the implementation of digital
public goods to strengthen digital public infrastructure that
benefits all citizens.

We're aiming to support more than 50 countries in this by
2025.

Aligned closely with the relevant WSIS Action Lines,
UNDP's programs show how we can effectively and sustainably
harness ICTs for development and thus achieve the SDGs. UNDP is
committed to stronger engagement and continued multistakeholder
collaboration with the WSIS Community, especially given the
ongoing global discussions and developments at the UN. It means
looking forward to the fort-coming review of WSIS in 2025 and as
well as working as part of the Global Digital Compact effort
that the Secretary-General mentioned.

It's important be that we consider how best to recognize
and reflect the long-standing and enduring work done through
WSIS and build forward in the future. I'm especially honored
that UNDP will take on the role of Chair of the UN Group on
Information Society or UNGIS for short the inter-agency
mechanism to coordinate and implement the Geneva Plan of Action
and agenda and aims to strengthen inter-agency collaboration to
help achieve WSIS objectives. We look forward to working
closely with all of you. Thank you.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much, Mr. Opp. We really cherish this partnership with UNDP and ITU will be pleased to co-chair with you. So with that, we would like to move on to our sponsors, without whom the WSIS Forum would not be possible in such a grand scale and would not be able to deliver so well. We would like to invite our platinum partner, His Excellency Majed Sultan Al Mesmar, Deputy Director General Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority, TDRA, United Arab Emirates. Please join us on the podium.

>> MAJED SULTAN AL MESMAR: I will be delivering my speech in the official language of Arabic, so if you don't know Arabic, you may use the headphones.

I would like to welcome you to the WSIS Summit, the title for society information in order to build back and accelerate the SDG. I would like to thank people who were part of the organization of this meeting, such as ITU and UNESCO as well, as well as the program, as well as directors.

This Forum takes place at a very important time. It takes place in the middle of the artificial intelligence, especially with the new technologies there are some fears, and they raise some important questions we dealt with in the framework of our meeting on human rights last month.

It was really important to deal with those questions and to mention our work program for the upcoming years in the new technologies where it is growing at a very fast pace. We have to be able to understand these challenges and review the negative impact of the technologies and implement new regulations for the new technologies.

During the 2022 Forum WSIS we said we have to implement new regulations in terms of ethics, and we worked for that regarding the digital transformation. All of these changes we have seen over the last few years, they have demonstrated that we have to put in place some regulations and we have to invest on the basic infrastructures which are basic, which are a necessity and not a luxury. In line with the UN motto, no one can be left behind. No one can be left behind from the digital revelations.

The challenges that we're faced with today are very important, so we have to take them one by one. We have to build bridges between us and strengthen the existing ones in order to face the future. This is why we have been supporting this Forum to 10 years, and this support is part of these common understandings because we do have a humanitarian message, we do live in one world, we do have common challenges in our fate as well. It requires an interconnected world. We have to remember that one-third of the world has no access to Internet. And a lot of people do have trouble accessing the Internet due to

their geographical position. It is the case for some countries that have no sea borders, so we do have to implement a Internet connectivity at a global level and strengthen the unity in the international cooperation, in a world where every child has access to the Internet.

Last month we did hear something new, and everyone talks about it. It's the GTP, the artificial intelligence form. Some people have been very careful with these technologies, but some people, other people welcome these technologies. So our country, in our country we had to implement a study to understand the benefits from the Chat GTP and what are the challenges for how in other sectors in order to know the way that we can use it in the most efficient way.

We have to come from these Chat GTP either negative or positive. Some people say we have to be careful with the new technologies, and they said that these new technologies could deprive us from our job, so we have to offer new trainings to strengthen the occasion for kids so that they can be leaders in the digital world and new technologies, so this is why we do need new strategies. They have to be implemented throughout our lives.

We have implemented the ethics field, and we do have digital laboratories for our children. So we have to strengthen the common part of our country toward the international guidelines in order to achieve the SDGs, such as offered by the UN, and as I said, so we have to be able to achieve our objective. Thank you very much.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you for the commitment toward the WSIS process since the inception that enables us to get together, all stakeholders working in the information technology to enhance the implementation of the projects, so thank you very much. I would now like to invite our last partner, Excellency Mohammed Saud Al Tamimi, Governor Communications, Space, and Technology Commission, excellency, the floor is yours.

>> MOHAMMED SAUD AL TAMIMI: Morning, everyone. I will please address my speech in Arabic. Morning, everyone. May God be with you. Dear Secretary, it's a pleasure for me to be with you for this really important event of the WSIS Forum. We do mention the way we can go forward and the way we can accelerate our work in order to achieve the SDGs.

The goals set by the WSIS Forum everyday, we can see the international community works on an agenda to present the new goals for sustainable development, so we have to place these goals from a more global perspective.

To give you a few figures, last year DES had reached a very high level, so I think we won't be able to prevent the global warming to reach the 1.5 degree. We do foresee 4.4

degrees if we are not able to get down our emissions. And the
level of the seas have risen as well in a very unprecedented
way. This is why we have to see where we can put a lens on the
issues without forgetting the new generation.

Ladies and gentlemen, you new that the technological
sector plays a really important role to achieve the SDGs through
what we call a cooperative approach which is based on the
sharing of data with very trusted data, which gives us knowledge
and power that will enable us to face those challenges, so we
have to do our best in order to reduce the negative effects.

Through these data and their power, we have to make sure
that everyone can have access to these data. Today more than
2.7 billion people in the world have no access to Internet.
This is why ITU offered this initiative of connecting the world
for the people who are not connected yet. If we want to build a
society based on knowledge and data, we have to do so and to
ensure well-being of the people at a global level. Saudi Arabia
has launched an initiative to help the people in Turkiye. This
is the biggest virtual hospital which is now connected with the
network of more than 150 hospitals, and the goal is to connect
so the people were connected again.

As I said, there are several challenges that we're faced
with in Saudi Arabia. We try to find solutions to these
challenges that works and WiFi can be a solution and can provide
us these access for everyone. This is why with ITU, we have
decided to launch 6 new projects, such as the 5th generation on
spatial platforms. Today we tried to strengthen our spatial
research with a new investigation project in order to produce
solar energy in different spaces so we would be able to produce
clean energy for 24 hours. The idea is to work on
sustainability, which is work we already began last year, and at
the heart of this strategy, we do have the Green Policy from
Saudi Arabia so that we could help the world towards a clean
path, so we do need to help everyone and this is why we held
bridges between the different governments and the different
sectors, such as the private sector, because these challenges
require global and concerted solutions.

As the governor for the telecommunications, that
governance will help us to achieve our goals. Governance will
be the solution that will help us to carry out this journey. In
order to end, I can confirm the international is on the way and
will help us to save the environment, and this is what
sustainability requires.

>> ALEX WONG: Thank you, again, to our partners for their
support. As we all know, WSIS is a UN process that involves
coordination and implementation of over 30UN agencies. We're
honored to have the heads of a few agencies on stage or on

virtual, so we will enter a segment here to invite them to say a few words. First, however, let me recognize the presence of Ms. Tatiana value vaio, Director-General of United Nations Office at Geneva. Can I invite you to say a few words, please. Thank you.

>> TATIANA VALOVAYA: Thank you very much. It's a great pleasure and honor to be today with you and I'm really very happy that Geneva once again serves a platform where United Nations and other international organizations, business, private sector, academia all come together to discuss very important issues on agenda. And, of course, Sustainable Development Goals agenda is crucial for us, and all 17 goals are crucial and important, and of course IT communications more than technologies can really promote and help us to build much better.

But when talking about Sustainable Development Goals, and today I'm sure you'll be talking about all of them, I would like to draw your attention to one of the Sustainable Development Goals. It's Sustainable Development Goal number 5, gender equality. Because I am absolutely sure that it is the SDG which can provide the most multiplied effect. And exactly in order to reach gender equality, digital technologies and innovations can do the most.

But at the same time, we have to be very, very realistic and cautious, and we have to understand also the challenges. I would like to share with this esteemed audience my personal experience quite a few days ago working with one artificial intelligence. Its name was already mentioned. I will not pronounce it again in order to give it more publicity.

This artificial intelligence was asked to produce a text about work, about work environment, and environment. It did produce a text I asked for in French to mask my French about a man called Roj who is a leader of a great enterprise and who is doing an excellent work.

When this AI was asked to change just one parameter, to change the name of George into a female name, the AI completely rewrote the text and Solange became not a leader of the company but just an office assistant who does a very important job, but well she has to support other workers in the organization and does it excellently.

So, we can see that this is a clearly gender bias, artificial intelligence. We can understand why. Because publicly available data is quite often gender biased. And we know that only 1 in 5 workers in the IT sphere are female, so that's a very important issue, and I'm sure it deserves a serious discussion.

We all understand how important technology is of the

future. We all understand at the same time how great are the
challenges, and I'm really happy that here in Geneva, we can
have very professional discussions, and we can also make very
important decisions. It was already mentioned that in the
Summit of the Future our plan to approve the Digital Compact,
and the Secretary-General just spoke about it. There are lots
of opportunities for us to work together, and we all have our
common goal, to leave nobody behind and really to implement
Sustainable Development Goals and make our future inclusive and
really prosperity for all. Thank you.

>> ALEX WONG: Thank you for sharing that story. Very
inspiring. Next, we have Mr. Masahiko Metoki, Director General
of the Universal Postal Union, UPU, a co-facilitator of the WSIS
action line C7, e-business, along with UNCTAD and EC. We're
going to move to remarks of 3 minutes because we're moving a
little behind. Mr. Masahiko, please, thank you.

>> MASAHIKO METOKI: Excellencies and distinguished
guests. First, I would like to congratulate the
Secretary-General and the whole staff of the ITU as a sister
organization on behalf of the UPU. It is my honor to address
you today at the Opening Ceremony of the World Summit of the
International Society Forum 2023. As Director-General of the
United Postal Union, I'm proud to represent an organization that
seeks to connect the world through the power of postal services.

We remain complementary and to supporting the
implementation of the UN Secretary-General Roadmap for Digital
Cooperation and Common Agendas. The UPU represents an industry
that employs over 6-million people, and network over 650,000
post offices in urban, rural, and remote communities that
provides vital physical, financial, and digital services to
billions of people, plus provide their own important human touch
in the enclosing digital world.

Our vision is to create a world where everyone everywhere
has access to reliable, affordable, and sustainable e-commerce
government and social services and financial services. Our aim
is to leverage on the postal network to accelerate the
development of an inclusive and sustainable digital economy, to
connect all the communities to a better future.

We are committed to ensuring that all post offices all
over the world are connected to the Internet by 2030 so they can
become themselves digital hubs. This will help to bridge the
digital and gender divide, especially in rural and remote areas
and in neighboring communities and small enterprises to have
access to the benefit of the digital economy.

Our pledge is to connect all post offices all over the
world to the Internet by 2030 is a bold and ambitious goal, and
one that we are committed to achieving with a Member State and

ICT partners. We believe that by working together, we can bridge this divide and create a more inclusive and equitable world.

As we gather here at the WSIS Forum today, let us remember that the people of technology rights needs ability to connect us and to break down barriers and create new opportunities. Let's work together to ensure the benefit of the digital age is available to all and that no one is left behind. Together the digital and physical network can bring about real inclusion, resilience, and well-being. But both worlds must work together in harmony.

Our UPU commitment to WSIS is a bridging the digital and physical world for inclusion and resilience. Thank you very much for your kind attention.

>> ALEX WONG: Thank you, Mr. Metoki for sharing that initiative. As someone you know, ITU and UNICEF had our initiative Giga to connect every school to the Internet by 2030 and we're already working with your colleagues, so we should aim to connect every school and post office by 2030. Excellent. Thank you for sharing that.

So, next, we have the pleasure to welcome Mr. Daren Tang, Director-General of WIPO to say a few words. Please, could I invite you, Mr. Tang, to take the floor.

>> DAREN TANG: Thank you. Dear Doreen, Secretary-General of ITU, excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure and honor to address this Opening Segment of the WSIS Forum, and I thank our esteemed group of sister agencies and the ITU for hosting us this week.

As the digital transformation continues to accelerate, more and more economies and enterprises are turning to innovation, creativity, technology, and entrepreneurship to drive growth and improve lives. Intellectual property plays a critical role in each of these areas, and at WIPO, our mission is to up hold and give you a balanced and effective IP ecosystem that supports everyone everywhere.

From AI and e-commerce to health tech, green tech, and other technologies, the most successful ICT entrepreneurs have consistently used IP to commercialize their ideas and to bring new products and services to the world, to change lives, to overcome the divisions, and to transform people.

More than 77,000 patents in ICT without WIPO's system last year and this is almost double the total of 10 years ago and represents the 8th year in a row that ICT-related patents increased worldwide. Reflecting on the performance of IP in the last years, we often see growth continues despite the extraordinary circumstances brought about by the pandemic, but it's now clear that it is not despite, but more because of the

extraordinary circumstances that many people around the world, enterprises and countries, have rethought what it means to grow and have turned towards technology, and therefore are driving growth in key ICT sectors.

Patent filings in both digital communications and computer technology, for example, have grown by 16% over the last 3 years since 2020, compared to growth of just 4% and 12% over the previous two-year periods. And in all ICT-related applications accounted for the largest share of patents, trademarks, and designs in 2022, and this is not just in developed countries but in developing country as well. This is remarkable and supports the key conclusion of WIPO's global innovation index, which is the ICT's evolve into general purpose technologies, we are on the second surge in ICT adoption, but future advances are to be truly transformative, if they are, then they must reach and work for all and leave no one behind. A widening technology gap is a very real threat to the world's developing and least-developed countries, and this year's theme rightly acknowledge the role of ICT in accelerating the implementation of the SDGs and building a better future.

At WIPO, we believe in the new more inclusive vision of IP. It's very aligned with the vision of the Global Digital Compact. We are working to bring IP to the grassroots and support innovators and creators in all Member States, especially those in developing and IDCs to use it as catalyst to job, investments, business growth, and economic opportunity.

The phenomenal rights of digital environment is opening up exciting new possibilities in areas where IP and ICTs in the same. WIPO will continue to support innovators, creators, entrepreneurs to leverage on these opportunities, including by building practical IP skills, using the latest technology to strengthen IP support and services, and bringing together a global community to deal with issues such as IP and funded technologies and copyright in the digital world. Excellencies, ICT don't just drive digital development, but they're also a powerful source of economic and social empowerment throughout the world as well. Let's find new ways of working together and make sure our shared goals of a more inclusive world where no one is left behind becomes reality and the ICT powers these changes as well. Thank you very much.

>> ALEX WONG: Thank you, Mr. Tang. We are also grateful for two of our Heads of Agencies joining virtually. Let me first call on Qu Dongyu Director-General of FAO the WSIS Action Line E7 agriculture. Mr. Qu, over to you, if it's on. Thank you.

>> QU DONGYU: Thank you. Can you hear me? Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I'm very

pleased to attend once again this important Summit and to affirm FAO commitment to common vision to build a people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented information society together.

I wish to thank the organizers and all the partners for their continuous and strong engagement. For our event a unique opportunity to exchange and most up-to-date information and build new knowledge and continue sharing our best strategies on the global digital agenda.

As well as our ongoing work to identify emerging trends and build even stronger partnerships in the face of the rapid evolution of our information and knowledge societies.

This year's topic is timely as we face the reality as we are lagging behind in our effort to build back better and achieve the SDGs. The world is in a very different place to where it was 7 years ago when we committed to the goals of ending hunger, food insecurity, and all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

Recently we just participated in the Secretary-General LDC, so I might point out that all the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS is of the essential agenda of FAO as I become four years ago as SDG because we start to say one office to coordinate all the relevant issues, including digitalization of the least-developed groups in the world. The gap that is needed to be bridged are still too wide, and urgently call for bold and collective action. We have been heavily affected by multiple shocks due to the pandemic, economy slows down, climate crisis, and war in Ukraine. This is harsh reality, and forces us to urgently reconsider our priorities and highlight the need to build more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient, and more sustainable systems.

In this challenging context, leveraging the global connectivity with enhanced access to information, data, and artificial intelligence as key accelerators and supporters of digital agriculture is essential. In this perspective, I hope that our discussions this week will capitalize and build around this close alignment between the information society forum and the SDGs, focusing specifically on the role of the digital technology as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen, digitalization and effective use of data in cultural and rural development, artificial intelligence, play a key role in supporting evidence-based policy-making, planning, and implementation to improve efficiency and productivity, as well as reducing negative environment impacts. And for the transformation, impact for the small opportunity of small farmers in rural communities for holistic and targeted interventions with concrete impact on the ground. Yet we still

have a large digital divide with only 47% of developed nations
and 19% of LDCs are having access to the Internet with the
barriers to the digital adoption, especially in rural areas,
literacy, digital skills, and lack of proper content, especially
more specifically professional-oriented apps.

FAO has strong focus and interest with impact with
technology innovation and data as key cross-cutting acceleration
across all FAO work to reach all impact and scale as set out in
FAO strategic framework 2022 to 31. The aim of our digital
impact is to excel action to ascheef the SDGs by promoting first
better and more timely access in realtime actionable
information. Second, sustained communication with the farmers
and stakeholders to maximize their benefits from the new
technologies. Three, improve access to the market, and credit
assurance through application of digital technology, fourth,
access to digital technology climate matter solutions, and fifth
enhancing the digitalization emergency interveng vengses and
social protection mechanism. It's the public private
investments to multiply digital benefits and remove the barriers
to the Internet adoption, especially for women use, rural
communities, and vulnerable populations, through the initiative
that improves the affordability, use of capability,
infrastructure leverage and potential of the ICTs. This
initiative includes among others FAO flagship hand in hand.
Four years ago we launched and it aims to accelerate
agricultural information and sustainable rural development
through irradicate poverty SDG 1 and end hungs ung hadder and
all forms of malnutrition and SDG 2 and as well as reduce
inequalities, SDG 3.

The initiative was launched in early and hand in hand
platform was recognized in May of 2022 with the excellent work
as best collaborative platform towards data-driven agriculture
at the geospatial world Forum in Amsterdam. The platform
leverages geospatial data and information with evidence-based
and agriculture development and interventions and
decision-making and championing 1,000 digital initiative that
aims across the world to support the acceleration of rural
transformation and reduce the digital gap, including the gender
and rural divide. Having inclusive resilience and the diversify
the income of farmers and FAO actively supported the efforts
toward the use of artificial intelligence, including through the
call for the AI and UN work on the common principles for AI, and
our joint work with the ITU and example of which is our joint on
digital agriculture action.

We must recognize the critical need for the cross-sector
collaborative and multistakeholder participatory approach to
ensure digital at the national and global level across all the

economic sectors.

Dear colleagues, 2023 is a crucial year as it is another time to bring together the global digital compact to be agreed at the Summit of the Future in September 2024. Building around the political decoration in 2022 of the UN55th anniversary as well as launch of common agenda by UN Secretary-General in 2021. FAO is firmly committed and fully engaged to enhance the partnership across the UN systems and beyond. Early and actively participated in multiple stakeholder digital technology track by providing technical expertise to have shared and open, free, and secure digital future for all.

Let us continue the work together in an efficient, effective, and coherent manner to empower potential of digital, accelerate achievement of 2030 Agenda and achieve SDG common goal of the four betters, better production, better nutrition, better environment, better life and leaving no one behind. Thank you. I wish you have a good day and fruitful interventions. Thank you.

>> ALEX WONG: Thank you, Mr. Qu. The WSIS process is also strengthened through the engagement of the UN regional economic commission, so we have our final speaker who is also joining us remotely, Ms. Olga Agayerova who is the Executive Secretary United Nations Economic Xition for Europe. Floor is over to you.

>> OLGA ALGAYEROVA: Thank you. Dear Doreen, excellencies, it's a pleasure to join you in this year's edition of the WSIS Forum. Most speakers mentioned here in today's work that is being shaken by multiple crisis that is undermining progress toward the 2030 agenda, digital technologies can make critical contributions to address the challenges we face, and indeed the ongoing digital transformation is opening new perspectives for economic development, for policy implementation, and the management of public services.

Digitalization can help to reconcile aspirations for increased prosperity with sustainability. It offers new possibilities for natural resource management, new channels of communication and collaboration. Digital innovation holds great promise in tackling also environmental challenges and advancing climate change mitigation and circular economy. Digital technologies are facilitating the decarbonization of the energy sector, the shift to sustainability mobility, and the reshaping of urban services in the built environment.

Dear colleagues, let me share just some examples from UNECE work. The first public can facilitate public input too and monitoring of decision-making in environmentalometers. The hosts of our convention recognize the importance of these tools for access to environmental information, facilitating public

participation in the decision-making, and assisting the public in obtaining access to environmental justice.

So, recommendations have been elaborated to support these goals. Second, UNECE is shaping goals through the regulatory framework for inland transport in line with ongoing technological developments. It is leading the normative work on automated and connected vehicles, which is a critical area for the future of mobility. It has elaborated regulations and technical provisions on multiple related areas, such as cybersecurity, software updates, and data storage among others.

Next one could be tracing materials that is critical for adopting circular solutions, the implementation of social and environmental standards and creation of uncontested certificates of origin, digital technologies offer essential tools to meet all of these goals, and UNECE has been exploring this potential in an increased range of sectors from textiles to energy.

So, as we see, digitalization offers great promise, but we must acknowledge it might have potential divisive impact, too. We need to ensure that existing digital innovation divides across countries do not become persistent development divides, and also within our own societies, digitalization should be a force for inclusion to avoid marginalization of some population groups. It was already mentioned also here that our concern at UNECE is on the aged population.

Next month, dear colleagues, we have the 70th Session of the Economic Commission for Europe and it will take place under the main theme of digital and green transformation for sustainable development where we expect to receive new insights and impulses for our work on all of these areas.

So, as always, we look forward to the collaboration with the ITU and other partners so we can effectively support our Member States in the efforts to accelerate the SDG implementation, and I wish you all an excellent forum. Thank you.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much. The UN Regional Commission continues to be the key implementers of the WSIS process at the regional level. Thank you, ma'am, for your support.

We would now like to move on to the next part of the Opening Ceremony. We are pleased, very pleased to have the co-facilitators of the Global Digital Compact here with us in Geneva. Thank you, Ambassadors for traveling all the way from New York to be with us to network, learn, and share with the multistakeholders present here at the WSIS Forum. Ambassador, Claver, we would like to invite you to the podium to give your a few remarks. Please, Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations Office in New York.

Ambassador, welcome.

>> CLAVER GATETE: Thank you very much for inviting us. Thank you, Secretary-General, for inviting us here, and good to meet the whole team here in Geneva. My name is Claver Gatete the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the United Nations in New York. Previously I was in government as Minister of Finance, and also the Minister of infrastructure.

I'm here with my sister from Sweden, we are together in New York, we are appointed by the President of the General Assembly, Co-facilitate a Global Digital Compact, which is the Program of the Secretary-General, knowing that technology is the future and has to play a role in terms of development, in terms of social development, and nothing you can do without it. It's a process that we have already started in terms of consultations. We have been consulting with Civil Society, private sector, and also member countries in New York. Also, we fear of course just as we start the process in terms of negotiations, it was very important to come here because this is where the technology lies at the global level. So, it was very important for us to have the last two days of discussion with you so we can learn as much as we can. It's a process where we're headed by the Tech Envoy, who has been with us right from the beginning, and we believe that as we do more consultations, we are going to come up with what you call an Issues Paper, a paper that is going to give us the building blocks of what we can negotiate with Member Countries. Definitely, your input is going to become very important.

The Global Digital Compact is really very critical because it's going to play a one of the biggest roles in the summit of the Future next year where the Heads of State are going to approve and will have to work with you, negotiate, and make sure that we have a pact that is going to be useful for us as we develop our own Sustainable Development Goals.

It's a very critical moment, and we want to make sure that Geneva plays a leading role in this process as we prepare for the Global Digital Compact.

I thank you so much, really, and really we are very happy and appreciate all the meetings we have been having here since yesterday morning. Thank you so much.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you, Ambassador, Claver. Now we would like to invite co-facilitator, Ambassador Anna, Ambassador Permanent Mission of Sweden to United Nations office in New York. Ambassador, the floor is yours, we invite you to the lecturn, please.

>> ANNA KARIN ENESTROM: Thank you so much, and I'm Anna Karin Enestrom from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations in New York and I'm very, very happy to be

with us together with my good friend, Ambassador Claver from Rwanda, the Ambassador of Rwanda in New York. We are so grateful that we can be part of this conference, that we can learn from you. We would very much like to listen and to see how we can bring in the perspective of Geneva to the process in New York, and really looking into how the two UN capitals can work very closely together in this issue and the issue of the Global Digital Compact.

        I think this is a unique opportunity for us to work together because as Ambassador of Rwanda said, these issues are key, and integrated in everything that we do inside the UN System and outside of the UN System. I just want to, there is not much I can add to what the Ambassador of Rwanda said, but I want to emphasize how important the process leading up to the Summit of the Future in September 24 will be. This is an opportunity for all of us to strengthen the international cooperation, the multilateral organization, and to work better together. Of course, the Global Digital Compact is key in that aspect, and will have links to all the other processes, not least this year to the Summit for the Sustainable Development Goals that will take place in New York in September.

        So, thank you so much for having us here, and we will continue to be in close touch with all of you working in Geneva and elsewhere. Thank you so much.

        >> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you, Ambassadors. It was really very enlightening to have all of these conversations already with you, and we'll continue during the week.

        We would now like to close this part of the Opening Ceremony. We thank all the panelists for being here with us today and would like to request you to please join the first row where your seats are reserved, and we would like to invite our Outgoing Chairperson, Minister of Nigeria and also our Chairperson designate, Minister of Slovenia to please join our Secretary-General on the podium.

        >> GITANJALI SAH: We commence, ladies and gentlemen, with the appointment of the chairperson for WSIS Forum 2023. I would like to invite our Outgoing Chairperson, his Excellency, Isa Ali Abraham, Federal Ministry of Communications and economy, Nigeria to say a few words. Sir, you have been outstanding in this journey for the entire year being the face and Ambassador of the WSIS process and several UN processes and meetings. Thank you very much, we hand over the floor to you for your remarks.

        >> ISA ALI IBRAHIM: The Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, the lady of the Global Digital Economy Sector, Doreen, the Deputy Secretary-General and other directors of ITU here present, also the leaders of United

Nations bodies here present, my colleagues the Ministers, members of academia, industry, private sector, leaders of government delegations, all other protocols dual and respectfully observed, good morning to all of you.

Permit me to begin by expressing my appreciation to the past and the current leadership of the International Telecommunication Union and other bodies of the yaigs for appointing me to serve as the Chair of WSIS 2022.

Furthermore, during the tenure 2022, we have recorded many achievements shows and I believe that some of them are unprecedented in the history of WSIS. Part of what we have done within that period of time is to ensure that the period for chairmanship of WSIS is not only restricted during the forum, but rather extended throughout the year so that the activities can be implemented effectively.

We initiated the idea in collaboration with the ITU Leadership, and that has formally been institutionalized on the 16 of October, 2022, at Bucharest, during the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference.

It is because of this that today makes it 287 days for me serving as the Chair of WSIS 2022 commencing from 31 of May, 2022. Furthermore, the activities of the WSIS remains very relevant and they're in alignment with most of the goals of the United Nations SDGs. It is because of this I'm of the opinion that it becomes necessary for Minister, heads of delegations to ensure that we promote the activities of WSIS beyond during our meeting here during the forum. Let us ensure that throughout the year, the activities are being promoted and also implemented effectively.

In addition, I'm glad that today it is officially the last day for me to serve in this capacity, and I'm also glad that the leadership is going to another iron lady, the Minister in charge of digital transformation of Slovenia, our colleague, and also my colleague from academia, she's an academic like my humble self. So I'm glad that today we have the first-ever woman to be the SG of ITU, and we are also having another woman to serve as the Chair of WSIS Forum 2023.

As our common says, whatever you give to a woman, she will give you a greater one. I have no doubt with this opportunity of handing over the leadership of WSIS to another iron lady, we do hope that by next year, we will be able to record many unprecedented achievements.

Furthermore, it is also very important to know that whatever you assign to a woman, you will discover they are more sensitive, they are more caring, they are more passionate than us, and I'm glad that today we are handing over the leadership of WSIS Forum to another iron lady that will work hand in hand

with the Secretary-General of the International
Telecommunication Union, and I believe that this is a clear
indication that within the global digital economy sector, we
promote gender equity effectively, and this is a clear
demonstration of that.

Furthermore, it is also important for me to use the
opportunity once again to thank my colleagues, the Ministers,
the Heads of Delegation all over the world from the support they
have given to us from the time I took over on 21 of May, 2022,
exactly 287 days ago, and that their support is appreciated, and
I do hope that the same support is going to be extended to my
sister, the Minister of Digital Transformation from Slovenia,
Excellency, Dr. Emilja, and I do hope that the same support is
also going to be extended to the Secretary-General of the
International Telecommunication Union, and I also am grateful
and most appreciative for this support of our major sponsors
during this period, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab
Emirates, and other countries. We appreciate that, and we do
hope that your support will also continue during the tenure of
my sister, the Minister from Slovenia, so that she will be able
to set new records, better records than what we have achieved so
far.. Once again, thank you very much for listening. Permit to
hand it over officially to the Secretary-General of ITU so that
she will convey the same to another iron lady and we will be
deleted, the leadership is now with women an not with us.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Thank you very much, Minister. We
would now like to invite, Secretary-General of the ITU to please
announce the Chairperson of WSIS Forum 2023.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you, thank you,
Gitanjali. Minister, we would never delete you, so you cannot
escape us but I do want to thank his Excellency, Minister Isa
for leadership and waving the WSIS flag high for no less than
287 days. Impressive. Thank you so much, excellency. We look
forward to your continued support in the WSIS process.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to pass the
gavel to Her Excellency, Emillia, thank you so much, Minister of
Digital Transformation of the Republic of Slovenia. We are so
delighted to have you with us and look forward to your
leadership for 287 days plus perhaps, but thank you, excellency,
for being with us and for agreeing to take on this important
role. It's my pleasure to hand the gavel over to you,
excellency.

>> EMILIJA STOJMENOVA DUH: Distinguished
Secretary-General, dear WSIS Forum 2022, excellencies,
delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it's a great honor and
privilege for me and my country of Slovenia to Chair this year's
Forum of the World Summit on the Information Society.

First, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin for her leadership and for making this forum an excellent platform for the exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices. I would like to add, lessons learned as well.

My thanks also go to the Forum's coordinating team and the various international agencies that have collaborated to ensure the success of the Summit.

May you leave in interesting times, goes the old English saying. We certainly cannot complain in this regard as our times are indeed interesting when it comes to technological progress. It is here and now on the cliff of a new era that we're dealing with many different challenges of the latest Industrial Revolution, and it is on us to ensure humanity uses these vast new powers in a sustainable, fair, and wise way.

Almost daily, we're witnessing a new scientific or technological breakthrough. The pace at which the world is changing is indeed unprecedented and both the individual and our society as a whole often struggles with keeping up.

Digital technologies have transformed the way we communicate, work, learn, socialize, and do business. They have also empowered us to create new solutions to address some of the world's most pressing challenges. Yet, we heard this today several times, not everyone has the access to their potential and not everyone is equipped to using the power.

The fact is that digital divide persists, and 2.7-billion people, particularly those in developing countries, still lack access to basic ICT infrastructure and services. Inequality in access to digital resources and skills can further increase existing social and economic disparities in the world.

Digital technologies need to be accessible to everyone, regardless of their age, gender, location, or disability. It is crucial to ensure that everyone, including women and girls, has access to open, reliable, and secure Internet. I firmly believe that access to Internet should be a human right, and that right should be universally recognized. After all, it is called World Wide Web.

In addition, we need to ensure that everybody, including women and girls, is equipped with the necessary skills and competences not only to use but as to create digital technologies in cutting-edge fields such as artificial intelligence is only 22% women. The Director-General clearly presented us the consequences.

We must not forget as a society that we're still standing on the shoulder of giants of the age of enlightenment, and their motto there to know. There is no transformation without the knowledge of how to use digital technologies. In fact, there is

no future without knowledge. Of that there should be no doubt.

The driving force of the digital transformation, 75% of young people worldwide use the Internet. Therefore, we should do our utmost to raise awareness and empower youth and children about online risks and prevent and counter cyberbullying and hate speech online. It should be our utmost priority to teach our children and grandchildren about all the implications of the power we will leave to them, and above all, to prepare them for responsibilities that come with this power.

Lately, we have reached a point when new emerging forms of artificial intelligence are forcing us to ask ourselves what does it even mean to be a human? As caretakers of the future, we should think long and hard about the answer. My country, Slovenia, has been an active member of the ITU and entire UN System. We are pleased to continue strong cooperation with all United Nations agencies. We wish to contribute to the greatest extent to encourage international cooperation in the development of telecommunication technologies and access to networks and services. Our focus lies on human-centric, human rights by design, and nothing about me without me digital transformation, while also taking steps to ensure the digital transformation is coupled with green and sustainable transition.

We offer our expertise while looking forward to the future exchange and learning from others. Dear ladies and gentlemen, this year's Forum will serve as a platform to track the achievements of WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs. I'm confident that the discussions and outcomes of the Forum will contribute to shaping a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable digital future for all.

I encourage you to actively participate in the discussions, share your experience and insights, and build new partnerships and collaborations.

Dear brother, previous Chair, Slovenia is known as one of the most competing nations, so trust me, we will try to do our best and beat your record.

I wish this Forum all the success, and thank you.

>> GITANJALI SAH: Congratulations to the new Chairperson of the WSIS Forum 2023, Minister of Slovenia, could we please have a round of applause for her.

(Applause).

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